columns, leaving them to make known to their descendants the innumerable ills, great hardships & tribulations which were to come. Abraham, the ancient philosopher and the prince of ruling patriarchs, was, in the opinion of some persons, the first inventor of letters. According to others, Moses first gave the Jews knowledge thereof; from whom the Phœnicians acquired the knowledge, & then the Greeks from the Phœnicians. Cadmus, according to Cornelius Tacitus,* & according to Pliny in the above-mentioned chapter & book, gave them to the said Greeks. Quintus Curtius, in his Book IIII, says that the inhabitants of the city of Tyre knew & taught them before any others, when he writes: *Tyrus, si famæ libet credere, literas prima aut docuit, aut didicit.*† That is to say: the city of Tyre, if report is to be believed, first taught or learned letters. Hercules, as Cicero says, in his book, *De Natura Deorum,*‡ gave them to the Phrygians. Nicostrata, who was called also Carmentis, as Cornelius Tacitus says, took them from Greece to the Latins. St. Cyprian the martyr says that Saturn first brought them into Italy, and taught how to stamp them on coins. St. Jerome narrates that Esdras, after the Captivity of the Hebrews, invented them because they were lost, and made them in other shapes & characters which the said Hebrews still use to this day.

I Should like right well to say who of their inventors brought them into France; but we are so poor in historians and followers of well-made letters, that I cannot recall an author of repute who has left a sufficient record thereof. Gaguin, however, says in the fourth book of his chronicles of France, that in the time of the King & Emperor Charlemagne, four disciples of the Venerable Bede whose names were Claudius, Joannes, Rabanus, and Alcuinus, came to Paris, and began to teach letters for pay, and that at the time the University took its beginning. But it does not follow that the making of letters and writing had not theretofore been practised. Long before Julius Cæsar came to France, the philosophers known as Druids were in the region of Chartres, at a place which is still called Dreux, & gave instruction there to all comers, making them learn by heart numberless thousands of letters. I cannot truly say here, or affirm, what manner of letters they taught, whether Hebrew, or Greek, or Latin, or French; but it is probable that they were Greek letters, as appears from the fact that Cæsar speaks of them in the sixth book of his Commentaries, § and that their appellation, Δρυΐδαι, is Greek. I can also venture a conjecture that the Hebrew letters had

* *Annales*, XI, 14.

† *Q. Curtius*, '*Alexander*,' IV, 2.

‡ III, 16.

§ '*De Bello Gallico*,' VI, 13, 14, 16, 18.

been known there before; for I have seen in the hostel of Fescamp, within the University of Paris, a great stone whereon are carved many fine Hebrew letters. I have seen two other stones carved in Hebrew, which are set in the courtyard wall of the house from which depends the sign of the *Trois Boittes,* on rue de la Harpe, facing the end of rue du Foing. Another I have seen near the Cordeliers, which was found on the spot where a newly built house now stands, between the Porte de l'Université, through which one goes to Sainct Germain des Pres, and the said Cordeliers, and of which half the letters can still be seen, inasmuch as they have been recarved; and the stone is used for a gutter to drip on. I doubt not that there are many others of the same sort, which I have not been able to see, which are in houses here & there, concealed in the earth.

THE Hebrew & Greek letters were abolished by Julius Cæsar; for he and the Romans were such great gluttons of renown that they desired not only to conquer kingdoms and nations, but that, while they destroyed laws, customs, usages, and all other excellent things, and demolished epitaphs and sepulchres, their victories and their arrogance should be kept in men's minds through their Latin letters, thinking to surpass the Greek language, which they were not able to do, inasmuch as the said Greek language is composed of letters more fitly disposed, so that it is incomparably more fertile, more copious, and richer than their Latin.

THE Greeks were instructors of the Latins in all manner of knowledge; witness Priscian, in the first book of his work on Grammar, entitled *De Accidentibus Literæ,* when he says: *Porro Græci quibus in omni doctrina authoribus vtimur.** 'The Greeks,' he says, 'are our instructors in every sort of knowledge.'

BEfore Cæsar came hither & brought in his train his Latin language, the Greek letters may have been, and in fact were, current here; inasmuch as, a long period of time and a great number of years earlier, as Baptiste of Mantua says in one of the books that he wrote to narrate the life of St. Denis, when Hercules journeyed beyond Spain, to the isles of the Hesperides, he passed through this country; and when he was on the island of this city of Paris,† he took so great delight in viewing the country & the river Seine, that he began to build there; then, desiring to proceed with his enterprises, he left a company of his men-at-arms, who were called *Parrhasians* from the name of their province of Greece,

* *Book* I, 4. *The original has* '*Postremo*' *for* '*Porro*.'

† *The Île de la Cité.*

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